

COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE
455 Golden Gate Avenue, Suite 14400
San Francisco, CA 94102

Contact: Victoria B. Henley
Director-Chief Counsel
(415) 557-1200

FOR RELEASE
July 17, 2017

JUDICIAL PERFORMANCE COMMISSION ISSUES DECISION AND ORDER
IMPOSING PUBLIC CENSURE OF JUDGE MICHAEL S. WILLIAMS
PURSUANT TO STIPULATION

The Commission on Judicial Performance has issued a decision and order imposing public censure on Judge Michael S. Williams of the Napa County Superior Court pursuant to stipulation (Commission Rule 127). Following the filing of a Notice of Formal Proceedings, Judge Williams, through his counsel, and the examiner for the commission proposed a Stipulation for Discipline by Consent (Stipulation) pursuant to Commission Rule 127(b). The Decision and Order Imposing Public Censure is issued pursuant to that Stipulation, which was approved by the commission.

As part of the Stipulation, Judge Williams agreed to resign from the bench effective December 5, 2017, and to be absent from the bench after October 19, 2017. Judge Williams was censured by the commission for taking two business card holders, worth between \$30 and \$50 each, from The City Club of San Francisco while attending a dinner held there by the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers (AAML) on March 9, 2016. On March 29, 2016, Judge Williams returned the cardholders with a letter to The City Club—after an AAML fellow told Judge Williams he had been seen on video taking the cardholders—and Judge Williams self-reported to the commission the following day.

In its decision, the commission stated that “Judge Williams’s conduct seriously undermines public confidence in the integrity of the judiciary.” In determining to impose a public censure pursuant to the Stipulation, the commission stated, “The judge’s agreement to resign effective December 5, 2017, and not to seek or hold judicial office thereafter affords protection to the public and the reputation of the judiciary in the most expeditious manner by avoiding the delay of further proceedings.”

The commission’s Decision and Order of Public Censure is available on the commission’s website at <http://cjp.ca.gov> (under “Pending Cases - Press Releases & Documents” and “Public Discipline & Decisions”) and at the commission’s office. Judge Williams is represented by Attorney Edith R. Matthai of Los Angeles.

* * *

The commission is composed of six public members, three judges and two lawyers. The chairperson is Hon. Ignazio J. Ruvolo of the Court of Appeal, First Appellate District. Commission member Hon. Erica R. Yew is recused from this matter.

For further information about the Commission on Judicial Performance, see the commission’s website at <http://cjp.ca.gov>.